

Co-operative Values and Principles

Co-operative Values and Principles are embodied in the Statement of Co-operative Identity, published by the International Co-operative Alliance.

What are Co-operative Values?

In summary, these are values of:

- Self-help
- Self-responsibility
- Democracy
- Equality
- Equity
- Solidarity

In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in a number of ethical values too including:

- Honesty
- Openness
- Social responsibility
- Caring for others

A more detailed description of co-operative values is available below, whilst you can also learn more thanks to a free taster version of our new Co-operative Values and Principles online learning course.

Click the button below, share some details with us and you'll be automatically sent through to the free course.

[Learn more about our free taster version](#)

Co-operative Values in more detail

Co-operatives throughout the world share a set of values that give them their distinctive character. Take a look at a more in-depth description, including definitions, below.

Self-help

In co-operatives, people help each other whilst helping themselves by working together for mutual benefit.

Self-responsibility

Individuals within co-operatives act responsibly and play a full part in the organisation.

Democracy

A co-operative will be structured so that members have control over the organisation – one member, one vote.

Equality

Each member will have equal rights and benefits (according to their contribution).

Equity

Members will be treated justly and fairly.

Solidarity

Members will support each other and other co-operatives.

Ethical Values

In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of:

- Honesty
- Openness
- Social responsibility
- Caring for others

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What are the Co-operative Principles?

The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice. In summary these are:

- 1st Principle: Voluntary and Open Membership
- 2nd Principle: Democratic Member Control
- 3rd Principle: Member Economic Participation
- 4th Principle: Autonomy and Independence
- 5th Principle: Education, Training and Information
- 6th Principle: Co-operation Among Co-operatives
- 7th Principle: Concern for Community

Co-operative Principles in more detail

Explore the Co-operative Principles in more detail by browsing the descriptions below.

1st Principle: Voluntary and Open Membership

Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

2nd Principle: Democratic Member Control

Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote), and co-operatives at other levels are also organised in a democratic manner.

3rd Principle: Member Economic Participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4th Principle: Autonomy and Independence

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

5th Principle: Education, Training and Information

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

6th Principle: Co-operation Among Co-operatives

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the Co-operative Movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

7th Principle: Concern for Community

Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

Further resources to explore

Interested in learning more about co-operative values and principles, or how co-operative education can help you and your community? Then take a look at our **latest online learning below**.

[View our online learning](#)

You can also get in touch directly with our Learning and Development team **by clicking**